

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo



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With Your Host

Maisie Hill

The Maisie Hill Experience with Maisie Hill

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If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

Hello, folks. Welcome back to the podcast. I have a returning guest this week, my partner Paul is here. And we're going to be answering some of your questions. These have been submitted inside my membership of The Flow Collective. And some of you commented over on Instagram as well. So, I pulled out a bunch of questions and they're really good. We're going to be touching on our relationship, autism, the menstrual cycle, parenting, work, everything. So, to start off, question number one, this is for you, Paul.

Paul: Hello.

Maisie: Hello. What's it like waking up to an absolute legend every morning?

Paul: Usually she's already out of bed.

Maisie: That's true.

Paul: So, when I wake up it's in an empty bed. But what's it like? Inspiring every day.

Maisie: Alright. And then what are your passions in life? What do you do that makes you happy?

Paul: Me?

Maisie: Yeah.

Paul: Make Maisie happy. What's my passions in life? I've got lots of them. Usually, it's something to do with the creative outlet for whatever projects ideas I have, my son, keeping up with you. I mean I've got lots of stuff that I'm doing, haven't I? I've got a radio station I'm running, design studio and then sort of personal individual creative projects. And then some music thing that I do.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Maisie: Your radio shows as well.

Paul: The radio shows so, yeah, I'm kind of quite fulfilled in that sense but it's never enough.

Maisie: I think that's what, there's always something going on.

Paul: Always.

Maisie: And I think that's the thing is we're both, we both, I think love what we do or are interested in progressing in what we do.

Paul: Developing what we're doing and yeah, learning more and finding out more about ourselves within that. But also, I would say that becoming a parent, I remember talking to my friend Tymon, and he was always a very active individual creatively and always got multiple projects, was always doing something. And I remember saying to him, "Will that slow down when he becomes a parent?" And he was like, "Absolutely not." Sort of totally adamant that it would remain the same at least but probably amplified.

And the way that he spoke about it is that for him to be a good parent and for his kids to have a good father that he needs to be fulfilled. He needs to be doing things that energise him and then he's coming to parenting I guess. He didn't say it in these words, but this is what I took from it. But then you can face parenting energised and knowing that you're also an individual fulfilling your requirements and your needs. And then, yeah, I mean that's, definitely that's how I approach things as well.

I don't want parenting or being a father to have any sense of resentment in terms of a compromise of my identity. So, I probably over exaggerate the amount of stuff I'm doing just to absolutely make sure, yeah, I'm still keeping, just a motivating factor in me that again allows me to then parent Nelson in a way that's lighter or more exciting. Sort of like we're sharing our discoveries almost. Nelson's always learning stuff, isn't he?

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

And I think it's in balance when in any relationship one part of it is doing, unless that's the accepted thing and that's how the balance works but I don't think it would in our household. That we're all firing on all cylinders.

Maisie: True. Okay. Well, as you started talking about parenting, we have a bunch of questions about parenting and home life. So how do we navigate co-parenting and resolve differences of opinion/parenting style?

Paul: Well, only recently we spoke about that Brian Clough incident.

Maisie: Yeah, go on, share that.

Paul: Brian Clough was, if you don't know, a manager, football manager I think in the sort of 70s, 80s of Nottingham Forest, known for being very single minded. But I remember something along the lines of him and a player having a disagreement. So, they went into the meeting room, had a discussion, then at the end of the discussion they both accepted that Brian Clough was right, sort of thing. So, in that same way how do we navigate parenting and decision making? I mean we've got to a point now I think we've got a good rhythm.

Maisie: Yeah, but I think we both have different, and this is what I discovered through my work with Robyn. One of my coaches was just talking about how I focus more on Nelson's inner world and you're better able to see him within the world. And I think that is very true. And it's not that we can't do aspects of that. But my natural tendency is to see or kind of be mindful of his inner experience, his emotions, all of those things whereas you will quite often make observations about him, how he goes about things, relationships that he has, all of that stuff.

And it's often news to me because I just don't see things that way. So, I think we're both able to kind of take care of each other's blind spots.

Paul: Yeah, because I do feel sometimes, I mean obviously we both cross over but yeah, there's times where I step into your domain because obviously it's all in me, but I'll look at you and I'll be like, "What, am I doing something wrong here?" But yeah, I think we kind of, yeah, we've got a

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

good, I think, but it's taken a while to get. And even now there's still moments where we're both of us, it's me or you, or you or me. Who's going to deal with this?

Especially recently where Nelson's been having quite sort of big emotional responses. And yeah, and even then because I always say to you, "When you're not around Nelson and I deal with it." But it's always difficult. And I think a lot of parents say, "That sometimes parenting is easier when you're just doing it solo." Not that anyone would choose to be solo because it's difficult. But you navigate and find your rhythm and your way individually. And then collectively you try to find that.

But sometimes that's going to be difficult where there's always going to be moments where we step on each other's toes a little bit. And also, Nelson's six, whatever, it's not a learnt art. I'm still learning it. I'm still discovering stuff in myself. And addressing the things that I experienced in terms of how I was parented. So, there's still there's moments where you have to decide in that moment and there's still a few things to, for me anyway at least to address before even just leaping into parenting Nelson.

Where is this decision or feeling coming from? How much of this has actually got to do with the situation and Nelson? It's all of that sort of stuff. So, I think usually I give Nelson a bit of time and then I will go and sit with him. And I think some of that is probably me processing. Where you I think are better at, you'll give him time but that's a conscious decision based, I think on you knowing how to parent in that moment. I'm usually doing some sort of addressing my feelings and emotions and then I mean I don't mean hours, but it might take 30 seconds or whatever.

Maisie: I think that's such a great thing to do for so many reasons. But I think there's either an expectation that you should be able to respond in the moment immediately in the most perfect parenting way or that it's unacceptable to walk away for a moment. Not even walk away but just take some space for yourself as a parent, all of us as parents to just process, notice our own responses and then come back into active parenting.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: Yeah. And also, again it's sort of understanding Nelson as well. So, giving him the time and respecting what he wants and needs even though he might not be able to articulate it. But I do feel when he's had, for instance an emotional reaction to something and then he might run off up the stairs. For me to go then, for any of us, either one of us I mean to go and chase him upstairs and then try to assess or ask him how he's feeling, why he's feeling when he's just literally just felt it.

I feel Nelson and I respond better, and we come to a good place when I've given him a bit of time to sit with it and feel it and then I go up and then we sit together and we discuss it usually. When I was a kid something happened and it's addressed in that second, however it's addressed. There's no time. And if you do walk off it's seen as this disrespect. So, you're going to be chased into the room or whatever or shouted at or told to come back and listen. I don't think any of that stuff is beneficial.

Maisie: No. And I think some of the time I would say is influenced by a flight response. Experiencing this emotional response and the stress response system work in a particular way that results in needing to walk away for any of us. So, if he's walking away but then us as the potential trigger/threat in the situation regardless of what we're actually doing. We're the source of the thing that's contributing or causing his response.

So then if he's fleeing but we're chasing after him then he's not going to have that impact on his stress response system. Whereas if he actually gets to leave and have a moment or whatever he needs and then the connection can come back together again.

Paul: Yeah. And we are a part of him, he's a part of us. And I think about how, if I was in a situation and I needed to leave that situation and that person followed me, tried to get the answer that they were demanding at that moment, my response would be, "What clue did you not get from me turning away and walking off? Why are you following me?" You start feeling caged in and all of these sorts of things. So yeah, and I think obviously he's young but there's maturity. I think that sometimes, well, I'm not going to talk for anyone else.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

But from my upbringing there's this assumption that young people don't know what they're doing or don't know how they're feeling. Might not be able to articulate it but they can definitely feel it. I remember as a young kid. And also, the way that we're choosing to sort of bring Nelson up. But yeah, it's just yeah, respecting him and what he needs and what he's feeling and what he asks for and what he's, all of those things. And just always being there to support him. It doesn't mean we have to be right in his grill trying to solve something.

Maisie: Well, it also doesn't give him a chance to develop as well because we're jumping in there instead of giving him opportunities to figure out how to be with himself and his emotions and responses and all of those things without us kind of overseeing the whole process in an unhelpful way. So, it's striking that balance. Okay, another great question is what do we do when we're both in a stress response at the same time?

Paul: Does it happen often?

Maisie: Well, that's the thing, I don't think it actually happens that often. I think we're kind of tag teaming without really doing it in an intentional way. But I don't think our household is a stressful one. I've definitely, I've been in relationships before whereas there's some of that going on. I mean not really that much. I have to say, I'm just someone who, I do not like drama of any kind. You and I both have a very low tolerance for nonsense of any kind. And I think that one of the great successes of our relationship is that we just don't tolerate nonsense.

Not that stress responses are nonsense, but I mean a lot of the drama and the push and the pull that's often in relationships, we just don't have.

Paul: Yeah. It's not to say we haven't had it but yeah, even, yeah, it's just a constant journey isn't it? Because obviously when we met that was very different. And then there's a lot of things that come up once we become parents. So, it's quite difficult to sort of pinpoint any moment and say, "Well, this is how it is." Because it's constantly developing. So yeah, I mean I think

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

also we're very different individuals in the sense that – what was the question about getting stress response or not?

Maisie: Yeah. What do we do when we're both in a stress response at the same time?

Paul: Okay, yeah. Well, I think the stress response is triggered by different things in us. Sometimes my stress response is triggered by the fact that you're getting stressed out, something that I think is worthy of both of us getting stressed about. And I'll be like, "What?"

Maisie: That does infuriate you I think sometimes.

Paul: Yeah, but that's got nothing to do with, that's got to do with me, why does that bother me? Isn't it quite good that one of us can take the slack a little bit? And vice versa really, I think when I can sense there's something going on with you and I'll ask, and you'll explain it and I'll be like, "Okay, well." It's very rare when we're both, or at least we both aren't, there were times when Nelson was younger, and he used to have his seizures when he got a temperature. I definitely sort of froze and you were much more switched on.

And then I think you would feel the fallout in a different way but afterwards. And then that would be when I'm a bit more chilled. I could just be with him.

Maisie: Yeah. And I think the other thing is that between my cycle and knowing now what we know about me being autistic, sensory issues and now bringing in astrology as well, I can pretty much predict, and I think you can as well when I'm more likely to end up in a stress response. So, we're able to mitigate that or kind of reduce the likelihood of it happening. So, for instance a kind of general rule we have is that I don't do the kids' birthday parties. That's one that you usually do.

There might be times when I do it if I feel like it's outside for example and it's not in a soft play then I might be more up for it. But we kind of know the things and the times that I'm likely to feel overwhelmed or stressed. So, I think then you create space around that somehow.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: Yeah, even that's kind of quite a new thing to our relationship as in when you were diagnosed, was that two years ago?

Maisie: I can't even remember. Something like that.

Paul: Three years ago. But it's that isn't it? I think it's an acceptance and understanding that we're not going to be good at everything or we're not going to be as good as each other at everything. And there are some things that one excels at and the other one might not but that isn't to say that they don't excel in anything. It's finding the balance and working with that rather than spending all that time and energy trying to change that person so that they're as good at it as you are which kind of seems a bit unnecessary when you're working as a team which I think parenting and relationship, the whole lot is.

You wouldn't have on a football pitch 11 people that were great at scoring goals and nor would you want to be. I mean at least you would want every player to be able to control the ball and pass it. But then within their given task that's where they need to kind of excel. And it's about the members of the team whether it's two or 11 having a balance and accommodating for each other sort of thing.

Maisie: Yeah. Well, that's actually one of the other questions we got. This person said, "You always talk about approaching things as a team, but does it always feel like that to both of you?"

Paul: Yes, because even in a team it's not about plain sailing, is it? It's not about discovering what the weaknesses are and not necessarily even eradicating them, just how as a team you work together so that those weaknesses aren't exposed as much as they would be when they're not acknowledged. And how do you compensate for that? It's not like we sit down and have some sort of tact. We don't have a board and work out the tactics of it but as you've just said for instance, the birthday party thing is that I know that it's not that, I just don't like them.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

I know that the multiple sensory kinds of things happening can be an overload for you. I mean it can be an overload for anyone but someone that has a sensory processing disorder, that's not something that can be changed or altered. That's something that is a fixed thing. So, it's about then okay, acknowledging that, understanding that and that's where I step in knowing that there are lots of other things that you step in that help me out.

Maisie: Yeah. And then the second part to that question is, how do you approach a topic or issue as a team, and do you ever need to remind the other that you are on their side? So, I will say that the times when I need to remind myself that you are on my side is just anything that feels confrontational to me or anything that's in the realm of I've got something wrong. Would you agree with that?

Because I think that's when I can go into feeling like I need to explain myself or correct, or I feel I've been misunderstood or anything like that just has particularly in the past made me quite defensive. And often you're just saying something that's very neutral and not a big deal. But because I think who I am, how I've been socialised, being autistic, just so many things contribute to my kind of natural tendency that I need to defend myself. I've got something wrong. I need to explain myself.

And that comes up, so I have done quite a lot and continue to do work on softening that defence mechanism in myself when it's happening. I think I've got better at catching it but it's still, that's the subtext of what is going on.

Paul: Yeah, and we have spoken about it before. I suppose because you will explain stuff that I feel that I don't – because the thing is it feels – this is the tricky thing to navigate is that an acceptance in me that this is what you need to do because it helps you clarify something I suppose in yourself maybe. And maybe part of that is then having to have it be clarified to me, so you don't feel or have those feelings of doing something wrong. And I have to remind myself, you're not telling me that because I'm stupid because for me, I've spoken about it before.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

In the design environment, if someone sat down and explained something in depth that everyone got around the table, we're working towards bigger questions being answered. Do you know what I mean? And there's an acceptance that it's part of the process that we all have to adapt or get not things wrong. Because that's the other thing as well, I don't really work with getting things wrong. I work towards getting things right or there's different angles in which you can arrive at a solution for instance.

So, taking so much time up about I got this wrong and then talking about it, you didn't get it wrong. It's just part of the process. It's just that things happen and so yeah, for me because it happens even recently. I mean it probably happened this morning I think. There was something that you were saying to me, and I know that I have to just listen to it and hear you explain it and that it's all just about you just need to do that. Because back in the past my response would be, "Why are you telling me this? I know. Do you think I'm stupid?"

And I think that's probably quite a general response to being overexplained or told something which two people can kind of understand, yeah, well, I wasn't supposed to do that or do that. It's just of course I wasn't because you don't have to explain it but you kind of do.

Maisie: But I think this is the other thing about being autistic as well, and just humans, we're just prone to doing this anyway. Is it all or nothing and I can sometimes kind of copy and paste something into a situation that's not necessary. So, for instance, there have been times when I've really consciously worked on improving my communication with you and involving you in things and sharing them. Because most of the time I just forget to or I'm just so in my own head that I just neglect to share sometimes really quite vital information with you.

And then other times just kind of by chat and so I can think, yeah, this is something I want to – I'll just be communicating. But then that spreads into things that actually are less necessary to communicate or less interesting to communicate but you're always very understandable with that and you're just like, "Yeah, look, you're talking more, this is good."

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: Good chat as well I say to you. When you tell me that you've discovered some app that does something. Good chat. Great.

Maisie: Paul loves my software chat. Alright, let's move on to talking about the cycle and I mean there's just so many great questions here. Let's start off with what's your perspective, your male perspective of living in a cycle aware way with me? So, this kind of goes on to how do you engage in cycle awareness and how do you support me on a practical level?

Paul: I think because it feels quite – obviously we haven't nailed it but that feels that that stage of our relationship seems quite even if it's not literally long. So, it feels like a long time ago because other things have stepped in. So, navigating autism and also just the everyday of parenting.

Maisie: But I think it's just so automatic now.

Paul: Yeah, but the main thing if I remember sort of back in the early days as a guy who's been socially conditioned and not educated at all which is fucking mind blowing. It's mind blowing, the things that I kind of discovered or realised through being fortunate enough to be with you, with someone that's clued on this subject. It fucking blew my mind how little I and 99, I could almost, 100% of guys would be about something that is so natural and so, it's not to be denied.

Maisie: It's ever present, isn't it?

Paul: Yeah, ever present, it's fact, it's absolute fact. And so part of it is acceptance, I mean which is odd, accepting that it's a fact, accepting it. Because it does feel like the social conditioning is to question, it's so odd, so fucking odd.

Maisie: Or dismiss it or laugh about it, yeah.

Paul: Yeah, but it's all dismissive. It's all dismissive. And it feels like such a long time ago and even if it's sort of tongue in cheek sort of dismissive ways of expressing that dismissiveness, it's sort of generalised or sort of softened by it being a joke but I don't fall for that shit. I wouldn't say

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

anymore, very rarely did but one needs to know. One needs the education and then to apply it and see it. Well, look, this point this happens, yeah, you're right.

Or once you do know you know kind of it just makes sense, it's not even, you know, it just makes a lot of stuff that's just always been omnipresent and been very much a feature. And even when I think about relationships I've had in the past, even family members, women in the family. And just knowing, well, that must have been, and even know potentially that they perhaps didn't even know. But you could sort of, especially when you're spending a lot of time with someone you can sense if you don't know, and you can choose to accept it or not.

Or there'll be an element of masking, so yeah, it's obviously first of all just knowing about it. And in an odd way sort of it's so odd to say, but accepting as opposed, and fighting off all of those social, what would you call it?

Maisie: Social conditioning.

Paul: Yeah, which kind of always sort of leans towards certain tiers of society, men, white men of an age, whatever and then works down from there. So, fighting that in a way, all of that sort of stuff. And then realising that everything is so much smoother, much more smoother.

Maisie: And you're very good at predicting, or not predicting but knowing what's going on. When I come out of my period or it's kind of days three to five and I'm starting to get some oestrogen back in and a kind of very tell-tale sign of that's what's going on is to start making fun of you and laughing. And then you're just like, "Oh, she's back." That's what you usually say. And then we just have a laugh about that. Or I think there's probably lots of practical ways that you support me but they're just so automatic now between us that we'd have to really think about it.

But I think on the whole my sensory stuff comes up more in the second half of my cycle around, there's just certain phases where that comes up. And you are very good, you just step in and do more parenting, or you take

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Nelson out or we just do things to accommodate me having time alone or not being touched, those kinds of things.

Paul: I think the starting point is to accept pure ignorance as a guy and not to then – to engage with the instinct, to question it, because to accept you're ignorant is not a feeling that we are taught is a great thing or a good thing. It's sort of, yeah, it's not seen as a – I mean that's the point of where you start learning. It is great – it can be seen as a great thing, but it's seen as something else. So, accept your ignorance and not instinctively go with that sense that you need to question it to make yourself feel right.

To really just to learn, listen, just let it, and just not be almost, don't question it, just learn and listen and work with it from that point. The departure point of pure ignorance and not this conditioned sort of sense that you knew or know something. And that you're so entrenched in that that you can't follow someone else's lead, listen to someone else, be guided by someone else who's much more knowledgeable about you, especially when it's about them and their body.

And also yeah, to kind of really accept that that means you're not going to get what you want all the time every time you want it. Do you know what I mean? On any level, whether that's chat, affection, any of, whatever, just work with that, not with what you're trying to impose, I guess.

Maisie: Okay. And then do you both use the same tools for thought work?

Paul: What? Well, I'd probably say no because what we're talking about right now, all of this tool work. Tools for thought work, what is this?

Maisie: Tools for thought work. So, there's the tools – this must be coming from someone inside the membership. So there's the tools that I teach all my clients how to self-coach, how to explore their own mind, their beliefs, their patterns of behaviour, all of those things. And to create awareness but also change where appropriate and desired. And you've done coaching before, not with me.

Paul: With someone else, yeah.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Maisie: Yeah. So, I don't know. How much do you use those things?

Paul: I mean I think it was great doing the coaching, it really was. It changed a lot of thought patterns. I don't necessarily apply the terms that you might apply to it because I feel like a lot of it, maybe some people have been doing or had to have been doing. And because of just how my upbringing or my place in society and this country and what have you.

So, it's very different. I don't think it's just not, obviously yeah, but I just don't call it, I don't give it the same sort of name because I think I like this idea that just changing one's thought patterns should exist beyond just the terms.

Maisie: The industry kind of way of, yeah?

Paul: Industry ways of marketing it, yeah.

Maisie: Yeah. And I think that's the difference. I'm a coach, this is my profession. This is what I do so I'm a product of my product. This is what I teach. These are the tools that I use a lot, really extensively and that's what enables me to teach them, share them with the depth and breadth that I'm able to. Whereas you're a civilian using it in a way that's probably more in line with how a lot of my clients do.

Paul: Yeah. But having said that, using, having worked with a coach and using and really being receptive to it wasn't like I was pushed into it, and it wasn't like I was reluctant. I was well ready. I was really up for it. And so yeah, I saw, especially with the coach, I mean I don't know, I've only worked with one coach so it's not comparable. But it was a brilliant fit. It did a lot for me and yeah, I suppose what was astounding about it, it was literally just deciding to change how one thinks about a situation, yeah, a situation.

And how that can, actually how powerful that can be. But sometimes it's very simple, you just need someone saying it back to you, putting you on the spot and not allowing you to wiggle out of answering the question that's being put to you or trying to deflect it or yeah, distract, disguise. It just feels

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

when you do get to the core of things we have the answer, we kind of know, just there's so much stuff to plough through to get to it. Anyway.

Maisie: Okay, similarly to that, how much do you share and talk about the work you do with your nervous system? I mean I would say not much, I mean it comes in useful at times when we might be talking about parenting either in terms of our responses to things that are going on. I know we spoke about it when you were doing your first performance last year in the run up to that in terms of that being a stretch for you and kind of your capacity for just expanding into a new experience that you hadn't had before. So, it comes in then, but I think that's about it.

Paul: Well, it's usually me telling you about how I'm feeling and then you explaining the reasons for it in alignment to sort of your knowledge of the nervous system and then it all makes sense. And I feel less, yeah, that makes sense. But you can kind of get caught up in it. If you're talking about that, the performance obviously. It's just intense anxiety, fear, imposter syndrome, just dread.

Maisie: Vomity.

Paul: Yeah, but then this conflict in, well, why have I chosen to have these feelings? Because no one made me do this. And then, but it's quite an amazing thing. And then literally as soon as I stepped out it was all gone. And I thought, that's when the, you know, I mean I did have fears of going out and what if I – it's quite crude but what if I actually shit myself? Or what if I puke or something? But then having, again, it's just having knowledge, some knowledge or just someone being able to give some sort of rational explanation.

And sometimes, I mean I trust obviously with you because I know you, that it's kind of rooted in research and not just opinion or yeah, it's rooted in research. You don't really say anything that's not been well researched.

Maisie: I have been known to kill dinner party vibes with talking about research.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: Yeah, but also the very opposite, enriched in the party by, I think at one point it was nicknamed G-STAT, we can refer to you as a fact checker. Yeah, so yeah, there you go.

Maisie: Okay. How do we communicate boundaries to each other? I don't think we need to.

Paul: Well, if we do we just verbalise it. I think but that's also because we accept that we can accept the other having boundaries and we don't see them as a personal reaction so to speak. So, it's not like your boundaries aren't there to – they're for you. They're not necessarily in reaction to me.

Maisie: Yeah, okay. And then the follow-up to that is and how do you manage to not act in co-dependent ways? So, codependency is a dysfunctional relationship dynamic where partners get enmeshed in each other. So that can be people pleasing, over-functioning, overinvested, over-caring, being over-responsible for the other person. I love the confused look on your face, I'm like what the hell is this?

Paul: Yeah, I don't know what this is.

Maisie: But I think I have...

Paul: Not to say it's not present. I just don't know what.

Maisie: Yeah, I think it's been there for me more so in the past and I've just had to learn to pull back and not over-function. It's just trying to manage other people in order for me to feel okay. So, I think there's been quite a few examples definitely in the last four/five years where I've done a really good job of not leaping in and things and just letting you have your experience. Or even when other people have tried to pull me in to speak on your or act on your behalf. And I've just gone, "I'm not doing that." And just said, and they've been very confused.

"But he's just your partner." "I'm not, if you want to talk about this situation that was going on then you need to go and talk to him. I'm not getting involved in that." So, I think I've gotten better at removing myself from

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

things and letting you have your responses and reactions without feeling like I need to take care of you or manage in some way.

Paul: I think maybe because you're perhaps, well, I don't know. Well, we're both quite good at telling each other when we need something.

Maisie: Yeah, I think that's a skill that I've built.

Paul: Yeah. So even that it's not like we just arrived at it out of nowhere. We worked towards it, yeah, so I guess we both have – well, I have – I don't know – I'm about to do it now, aren't I, talk on behalf of you? I have a respect for you and also an awareness of how independent you are. And to know that anything that I might do that would conflict with that or contradict that would not just be disrespect to you, but you would fucking go bonkers about it. I've told you once this is what.

We have that conversation where even where it feels I ask you the same question again because I'm almost not believing your first answer. And you're like, "I've already said. I'm happy to walk all the way to the studio in the rain. I don't need you to give me a lift." "Go on, you must." That's on a very basic level but from that point upwards.

Maisie: Yeah, I think the thing is, there's things where seven to nine years ago when we first got together I might have liked you to do, or I would have had a different response to a question or just a situation that was going on. But then there's things I have actively worked on over the years to have a different response or to do things in a different way. So, I think sometimes what happens in relationships when one person has done some inner work and evolved in some way is the other person's expecting them to still have the response that they used to have.

And it's a very loving thing to do but then the other person's going, "Well, hold on, this is what's going on." But we do joke about, I can't do the impression, is it from Allo Allo? I feel, is that what it's from, is that, I will say this only once?

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: Yeah. But then also sometimes that you do say something and when I break it down you'll be like, "Oh, yeah, actually maybe." But you'll say it as a response of I feel – and that's again, it's just us knowing each other. I do feel that you're giving an answer because you think it's going to put me out. And so, when I break it down and you'll be like, "Yes, okay, alright, that does sound, yeah. Let's just do that", or whatever.

Maisie: Yeah, you are really good at catching those things and breaking them down for me bit by bit and then I'm like, "Oh, yeah." So yeah, it's good that you do that. Okay, how do you navigate the sensory and other requirements that Maisie has because of being autistic? And how do you both communicate this? Well, that's ongoing I think.

Paul: Yeah, it's ongoing. Sort of work on one bit at a time. I mean the other day you elbowed me in the chest which was initially quite shocking.

Maisie: Yeah, but I didn't just do it from nowhere. I just needed to let the situation...

Paul: But even then it was quite interesting because I would say I had a very sort of instinctive or visceral response to that but then when we spoke about it. I mean it wasn't like you didn't elbow me in the chin and I was on the floor. It was just a very – and you were like, "I didn't know you were there." And I was just shocked that you didn't know I was there because that's kind of where I was and chatting to you. But in the context of then it made me understand the sensory how maybe at certain points in your cycle how heightened your sensory response is.

To the point where sometimes you're not even quite in control of it which then made me – was quite an important leap for me in really getting a sense of it's so deep for you, it's not I just don't like touching this or I just don't like. It's not like I can't really understand when there's someone talking to me and there's music playing and it's not that. It's something very – it can be physical.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Maisie: Yeah, and I think there's lots of adjustments that you make but I think a big part of it is me needing to speak up about what the things are because I think there was a period in time where I just expected you to know what those things were without me saying anything which was unfair. But it also blows my mind because you know that time when Nelson was sitting on your lap eating, I don't know, cucumber and his mouth was right next to your ear? And I was just looking at you thinking, how on Earth are you putting up with that?

And I spoke to you about it afterwards and you were like, "It didn't bother me at all." I'm like, "Wow." That blew my mind that you could have someone eating cucumber right next to your ear and it would not bother you at all. It still amazes me but that's the thing because for me just hearing someone eat cucumber in the room, not even next to my ear is going to be an issue no matter where I am in my cycle. And then if it's a particular point in the cycle, if I'm already feeling a bit dysregulated then it's full-on fight, flight.

But I think maybe we don't as a family have a lot of expectations that maybe we grew up with or other families now might have in terms of we all need to sit at the dinner table and stay seated and eat together and in silence and all of those things.

Paul: Yeah, these kinds of really weird roles that everyone has to play and these strange rules and traditions. And ultimately if you want your kid to eat and he eats he's having a great time and he eats all these foods while standing up. And he doesn't eat when he's sitting down for whatever reason, let him stand up. I mean that's the thing when you talk about, why would it bother me, he's eating? And with the carrot thing, it is kind of odd because I do remember. Well, I think the bigger things bother me and they're usually outside the house. See what I mean?

So, I can always address, well, my son eating carrots near my ear doesn't bother me as much as x, y, z which are usually more sort of bigger external issues. I can't be bothered by everything. I would choose to be bothered by the important things.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Maisie: But that's the thing and I think me verbalising it to you, you accepting that these are not choices, they're like you said, they're just facts, this is how they impact me. And then you are, yeah, you just want to know, you're just like, "But if this is bothering you just tell me." And I'll often, like with the length of your beard or stubble for example, we now know there's a length that it can get to that prickles me and I don't like.

Paul: It's not even you don't like is it, it's not about liking?

Maisie: No, it's not like, no.

Paul: Yeah. But at the same time, I'm never going to be clean shaven. There's a middle ground.

Maisie: Yes, exactly.

Paul: If you're like, well, at the length that it is now which is sort of slightly shaven from yesterday, if you're like, "Well, I can't kiss you", you can't kiss me like that I'd probably say, "Well, I'll have to decide whether being clean shaven, which I don't like is more important than kissing you." And maybe I don't know.

Maisie: Well, especially and then usually because my period's due to start any day now. So, there's going to be a wider range of tolerance for these things a few days in. So don't need to make major changes to your appearance or way of doing things for the sake of a few days.

Paul: Yeah, you can grow your beard this part of my cycle.

Maisie: But it is, I think it's probably I imagine for you, I think it's easier when it's things that aren't to do with you and more to do with just things in the household or stuff like that. Would that be fair?

Paul: What do you mean?

Maisie: So, with the handle to the fridge, that's going to be different to the length of your stubble or something like that.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: If I can adapt then I will adapt. I think, but the thing is, it's all about choices, isn't it, making the choice? And the first choice is that I want to be with you. And I like being with you and all the rest, and I love you. And it's that because if there was any question in any of those things I probably would be like, "I don't give a fuck, I'm growing a beard." Or you'd be more resistant to accommodating and you start feeling things are perhaps more one sided and you do the things that one does to dig your heels in and all of this sort of stuff.

Well, I'm not going to do it because you're telling me to. So, I don't really – if it was that then obviously I would probably go the opposite way because I'm contrary like that.

Maisie: So, then I think, well, this next question I kind of feel you've already answered about what it's like being with someone who's neurodiverse. Is there anything you want to add to that? I mean sure there's all sorts you could add in. But the question is, what's it like being someone who's neurodiverse and who isn't actively trying to mask all the time?

Paul: Yeah, it is what it is.

Maisie: There we go.

Paul: I mean, obviously we're discovering stuff and again, depending on how one thinks about it I could say, "Well, yeah, I don't like it when it's like that." But it's such a half-baked way of responding to something, "I don't like it." It's like, well, who cares? What does it actually mean? Do you know what I mean? I feel we need to all work in a bit of a deeper level and not just on a very superficial surface level of I don't like it when this happens, I don't like it when that happens. What are the bigger implications to deciding whether you're going to go along with something or not go along with something?

And what are those implications beyond you, also beyond your relationship? What are those implications? I don't agree with a certain behaviour pattern in terms of if everyone had that, how would society be?

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Then surely you've got to alter it in yourself. You can't leave it to everyone else to change or do things differently whilst you just remain sod it in your ignorance or your kind of blissful ignorance or your unwillingness to learn or adapt. Just be open, do you know what I mean? So, what was the question?

Maisie: I don't know but I think you've answered it. It was, what's it like being with someone who's neurodiverse and not masking?

Paul: It's better than someone – well, not better, it's more enlightening, I don't know, than if you were making. And I think there would be a lot more issues if you were masking. Yeah, I mean all one can do is just put it before the other person and the other person has the freedom to choose how they want to work with it, live with it, or understand it, all of those things. I think what would really disrupt our relationship if I didn't have the right to be able to decide how I want to navigate something because it's not even being presented to me, it's being hidden from me.

Maisie: Yes, definitely. This one's for me. How do you cope with having all the knowledge about emotions, self-coaching, the nervous system without applying it all to your partner, e.g., not automatically coaching him when he has an issue? Well, I think there was probably a point in time when I really wanted to use all of that stuff, probably in my eagerness of learning things and wanting to try them out and being excited to share it which is what a lot of my clients experience too. This has come up a lot.

In fact, I spoke about it in an episode with Maggie Reyes, but I just stopped thinking that you needed to be fixed. Go on, what are you going to say?

Paul: Isn't that what your clients or members are for?

Maisie: Yeah, well, exactly.

Paul: Not to be fixed but for you to explore this knowledge with them and sort of guide them or whatever it is you're doing over there.

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Maisie: Yeah, over there but yeah, but I think before the membership and before working in the way that I do now, I mean you asked me for coaching at the weekend and I coached you on a couple of things. But I think that's the first time. I mean I didn't really even get into coaching you because you ended up, you started saying, "Can you coach me on this?" And I started coaching you and you went, "Okay, I don't want coaching on this."

Paul: Yeah, coaching for me sometimes is me saying something and then you going "Well, how do you feel about that or what do you think about that?" And then I'm like, "I don't bloody know, that's why I'm asking you."

Maisie: Well, I think that's the thing is that for you, you think a lot of – I think this came up more when I was a practitioner and you would say, "I'm not your client, stop talking to me like I'm your client." And I think your perspective was, I do this as a profession and now I'm taking that style of communication and questions into my relationship with you. Whereas my perspective is, this is how I've always communicated which is what has made me great as a practitioner and coach. So, I just think of it as this...

Paul: Yeah, I think what it is sometimes I will say, "Should I go for a plain croissant, or should I go for a panna chocolate for instance?" And I just want you to say, "A croissant." And you'll go, "Well how does", there'll be like a [crosstalk] conversation.

Maisie: No. And I will just be thinking, why are you asking me a question? That's in my head.

Paul: Yeah, but sometimes it's just like, I don't know what the choice is here, so many choices, it's all good, what one should I go for? And then you just say it, but you'll be like, "Well", it'll be more of starting a conversation. I'm like, "Seriously, the queue's getting big." And I'll just pick. But then I'll just pick it and then you'll say something like, "So you knew what you were going to go for or what you wanted."

Maisie: Well, I think this is an ongoing thing for me because I feel there are so many decisions that I am needing to make on a daily and weekly basis. I

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

don't want to be assed about croissants or whatever the thing is. So, a lot of the time I'm a bit bamboozled, why the fuck is he asking me this?

Paul: Yeah, I understand that. No, it's good to know that though. I suppose it's like a comedian does what he does for a living and when he goes home everyone's saying, "Go on, tell us a joke."

Maisie: But I think it's just chat to you. I think these kinds of questions are just chat to you.

Paul: Yeah, sometimes, just chat, yeah.

Maisie: Where to me I'm being asked a question, is this seriously what I'm being asked? Is that what I'm actually being asked? Am I using my brain for this level of...

Paul: Okay, got it. The brain's only been switched on for big questions.

Maisie: Now, well, I don't know if I can ask this after saying that. What's the best thing about being involved with someone who's a life coach?

Paul: Always got the right answer when they're willing to give it to you.

Maisie: Say more on that. What do you mean? What do you mean, always got the right answer?

Paul: What's it like being with a life coach?

Maisie: Yeah. What's the best thing about being involved with a life coach or the worst thing if you want to give me?

Paul: No, the best thing, yeah. I trust that you're sorting yourself out basically. When you're going quiet, I'm like, "She's obviously coaching herself on something." And maybe without that awareness it would be, we just spoke about it just then, just asking each other pointless questions. But you're doing all that work and then we just deal with the big stuff.

We don't get caught in all of the, wading through the mud of little, lots of little things and lots of little questions or trying to get oneself to a point to be

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

able to make the decision sometimes is a hard thing. But you get yourself to that point on your own and then energy is used on what then that thing is.

Maisie: Yeah. And I think the times, the places where I am more prone to getting overwhelmed, you're good at coaching me through those things when I come to you and say, "This is a thing I'm trying to figure out. I'm not sure what to do." And you're really good at coaching me/offering your expertise and viewpoint on it.

Paul: There you go. And obviously I know that I can come to you and say but no, it's quite good because it's very specific, as I said, I don't use the term coaching in the way that you do, in the way that you just used it then. I don't see what I'm doing as that but it's just a word, it's just a term, whatever.

Maisie: I think you coach people all the time without realising that's what you're doing.

Paul: Maybe. When I say that to you I feel I'm switching, I'm flipping a switch then we know what we're chatting about because I can just talk to you about something, "Can I get your view on this or can I get your opinion on this?" But if I say to you, "Can you coach me on this?" You spark up and I can see you kind of start sitting, not that you get a notepad out but if you did have one, that's what you'd be doing, it's business.

We're going to start somewhere and by the end of whatever it is, five minutes, two minutes, one, 30 seconds or whatever it is. At the end of this it's going to be proactive. And sometimes I think when I say, "I don't want to be coached." It's not about being – it's just letting things unfold or just come out or just there's a kind of more of an exchange. I don't know if you even know what I'm talking about here.

Maisie: I do know what you're talking about, but I think that's the thing that I don't...

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

Paul: It's a caller response thing or it's more sort of improvised or it's more free and creative. But when we talk about, flip the coaching switch, it's not that. It's data and assessing and giving some sort of real – solution's not the right word. But as I said, some sort of pro...

Maisie: I think it's getting somewhere and it's not necessarily about making changes or taking action but it's just getting to a place of awareness and understanding that something just resolves itself through that awareness or it becomes clear what needs to be done instead.

Paul: Yeah. There's much more clarity and it's much more productive. It's much more not pressurised in terms of setting a goal or an objective and working towards. It's much more tangible.

Maisie: Yeah. I think I do a good job of holding back most of the time. I don't really think I coach you that much.

Paul: You don't really.

Maisie: So, it's different, whereas Mars and I, and other friends I have, we just fall in and out of chatting as friends and then coaching one another. But there's that kind of ongoing consent that we're both up for that. Whereas other relationships I have with, even with other coaches and kind of civilians, non-coaches. Then I do always ask for consent if I am going to offer anything that's in the realm of coaching.

And it may not even be strictly coaching but one of Nelson's mate's mums was messaging me about something the other day and I was fuming with her about something. And then I was like, "Do you want me to just stay fuming with you or can I suggest something or ask something?" So, it's always, even in terms of that, I think that's not even coaching. It's just asking someone what they want. Do you want me to just listen? Do you want advice?

Paul: It's an awareness of the dynamic of the relationship you're having with that person whoever that person is at that moment and sort of reading the room, getting a sense of what the tone is. Not there's a time but

Ep #114: Q&A With Paul Camo

obviously there's a moment where might not be required in that moment.
Next.

Maisie: Okay, final question. What's the impact of being with a partner who is continuously growing and striving?

Paul: In a word, inspiring.

Maisie: The same for me. Alright, that's it for this week.

Thanks for listening. Goodbye.

Hey, if you love listening to this podcast then come and check out my membership, *The Flow Collective*, where you get my best resources and all the coaching you need to transform your inner and outer life. Sign up to the waitlist at theflowcollective.co/join, and I'll see you in the community.